

Message Text

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION -- U.S. POLICY IN MIDEAST

1. SUMMARY. ANNOUNCEMENT THAT U.S. IS TO REASSESS ITS POLICY IN MIDEAST BANNERED AND FRONTPAGED BY ALMOST ALL BEIRUT PAPERS MARCH 25 AS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN MIDEAST DIPLOMACY. ONLY LEADING LEFTIST PRO-PLO "AL-MUHARRIR" DOUBTS U.S. MOTIVES, HEADLINING "AMERICA DELUDES ARABS AND WORLD BY GIVING IMPRESSION THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IT AND ISRAEL." NEWS TORIES ON DEVELOPMENTS IN WASHINGTON AND MIDEAST CAPITALS BASED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON WIRE SERVICE REPORTS, BUT LEADING INDEPENDENT "AN-NAHAR" CARRIES EXCLUSIVE CORRESPONDENT'S REPORT FROM WASHINGTON AND INDEPENDENT FRENCH-LANGUAGE "L'ORIENT-LE JOUR" CARRIES EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS OF SITUATION AS SEEN FROM DAMASCUS. CLOVSI MAKSOUD, FORMER ROVING ARAB LEAGUE ENVOY IN U.S., AND HISHAM SHARABI, EDITOR OF JOURNAL OF PALESTINE STUDIES, AS WELL AS NUMEROUS LEBANESE POLITICIANS, EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON PROBLEMS AND FUTURE OF MIDEAST DIPLOMACY, STRESSING IN THEIR VARIOUS WAYS THAT KEY TO SETTLEMENT REMAINS IN U.S. HANDS. MOST OF EXTENSIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT, INCLUDING THAT

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OF LEADING INDEPENDENT "AN-NAHAR", LEADING PRO-EGYPTIAN "AL-

ANWAR", PRO-SAUDI "AL-HAYAT", AND LEADING LEFTIST PRO-PLO "AL-MUHARRIR", CALLS U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT THAT IT WILL REASSESS ITS MIDEAST POLICY ADMISSION OF ISRAEL'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE OF SECRETARY'S MISSION, URGES U.S. TO TAKE EFFECTIVE STEPS TO PROVE THAT IT IS IN EARNEST, AND NOTES THAT, IN ABSENCE OF RADICAL CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY, GENEVA CONFERENCE IS DOOMED TO FAILURE. PRO-SOVIET LEBANESE COMMUNIST PARTY ORGAN "AN-NIDA" FOR ITS PART CALLS FAILURE OF SECRETARY'S MISSION DEFEAT FOR AMERICAN IMPERIALISM AND FOR THOSE WHO TRUSTED AMERICA'S "GOOD INTENTIONS". PRO-LIBYAN "AS-SAFIR" ATTACKS MUSTAFA AMIN FOR WHAT IT VIEWS AS HIS ATTEMPT TO ABSOLVE U.S. OF ANY BLAME FOR FAILURE OF SECRETARY'S MISSION. END SUMMARY.

2. LEADING INDEPENDENT "AN-NAHAR" HEADLINES: "FORD DECIDES TO REVIEW AMERICAN AID TO ISRAEL." INDEPENDENT FRENCH-LANGUAGE "L'ORIENT-LE JOUR" BANNERS: "WASHINGTON: 'YES' TO GENEVA, 'BUT WE ARE HEADING FOR CERTAIN FAILURE,' BELIEVES KISSINGER, WHO DEPLORES ISRAEL'S MYOPIA." LEADING PRO-EGYPTIAN BANNERS FAHMI'S SPEECH TO ARAB LEADERS: "EGYPT DISCLOSES DETAILS OF CONTACTS: THIS IS PROPOSAL ISRAEL REJECTED," AND HEADLINES WASHINGTON STORY: "AMERICA REVIEWS ITS POLICY IN MIDEAST." LEADING LEFTIST PRO-PLO "AL-MUHARRIR" BANNERS: "WILL BEIRUT BE TARGET OF NEXT AGGRESSION," AND HEADLINES WASHINGTON STORY: "AMERICA DELUDES ARABS AND WORLD BY GIVING IMPRESSION THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IT AND ISRAEL. FORD IMPLIES DECREASE IN ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL." PRO-SYRIAN "ASH-SHARQ" BANNERS: "HUGE ISRAELI CONCENTRATIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON," AND HEADLINES WASHINGTON STORY: "AMERICA REEVALUATES ITS POLICY IN MIDEAST."

3. LEADING INDEPENDENT "AN-NAHAR" FRONTPAGES EXCLUSIVE REPORT FROM CORRESPONDENT IN WASHINGTON, RAFIQ MA'LUF, QUOTING "A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS" AS BELIEVING THAT FORD ADMINISTRATION WILL USE PENDING ISRAELI REQUESTS FOR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL AND "OTHER OBSERVERS" AS BELIEVING THAT U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT MAY BE NOT SO MUCH PRELUDE TO NEW POLICY AS ATTEMPT TO BUY TIME AND SEE HOW SITUATION IN MIDEAST DEVELOPS.

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4. INDEPENDENT FRENCH-LANGUAGE "L'ORIENT-LE JOUR" FRONTPAGES EXCLUSIVE ANALYSIS OF SYRIAN PERCEPTIONS BY CHIEF EDITOR EDOUARD SAAB: "ALTHOUGH THEY BANKED ON FAILURE OF KISSINGER MISSION AND DID EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO IMPEDE IT, SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS ARE NONETHELESS SHOWING THEMSELVES ANXIOUS ABOUT WHAT IMMEDIATE FUTURE MAY BRING.' IF THEY WERE DEAD SET AGAINST STEP-BY-STEP DIPLOMACY, IT WAS NOT TO DISCREDIT MR.

KISSINGER ... BUT TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST POLICY MEANT TO DIVIDE ARAB FRONT.... IT REMAINS NO LESS TRUE THAT, AT LEVEL OF HIGHEST SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN HIERARCHIES, PEOPLE HAD ENDED UP ADMITTING THAT ONLY U.S. COULD WREST CONDITIONS OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICT ... FROM ISRAEL. OFFICIALS IN SYRIA WERE STILL PUTTING THEIR CONFIDENCE IN MR. KISSINGER TO PROCEED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ASSOCIATE YASIR ARAFAT'S PLO IN ANY SETTLEMENT PROCESS.... ONLY ONES OPPOSED TO 'FAILURE' OF ISRAEL WERE PALESTINIANS, AND IT WAS NECESSARY TO COAX THEM IN ORDER TO REACH POTENTIALLY CONCLUSIVE RESULTS... BUT AMERICAN MEDIATOR'S ACTIONS LMMM DURING LAST FEW MONTHS, IT IS ADDED IN DAMASCUS, MADE PLAIN U.S.'S SECRET INTENTION TO SOW DISCORD IN ARAB RANKS.... SYRIA SAW ITSELF FORCED TO HARDEN ITS POSITIONS TO POINT OF IDENTIFYING ITS POLICY WITH THAT OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE... TO FORCE EGYPT'S HAND.... WESTERN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES IN SYRIAN CAPITAL FOR THEIR PART EMPHASIZE PERILS WEIGHING ON GENEVA CONFERENCE...."

5. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE "DAILY STAR" QUOTES CLOVIS MAKSOUD, FORMER ROVING ARAB LEAGUE AMBASSADOR IN U.S., ON OPTIONS OPEN TO U.S.: "IT IS CRUCIAL TO DETERMINE HOW J.S. READS VARIOUS RESPONSES TO DR. KISSINGER'S MISSION. WILL DR. KISSINGER INCLUDE IN HIS REPORT THE INTRANSIGENCE IN ISRAEL'S ... MAKEUP OR WILL HE CONFINE HIS REPORT TO THE 'IRRECONCILABLE' ASPECTS OF NEGOTIATIONS ... WITHOUT GOING INTO CAUSAL FACTORS? IF DR. KISSINGER INTERPRETS... ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE ... AS INDICATION OF ISRAEL'S UNANSWERABILITY TO INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS AND DIPLOMATIC REASONING..., THEN THERE IS HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. TO REVISE ITS POLICIES TOWARDS MIDEAST QUESTION. IF U.S. SEES ISRAEL AS CAUSE FOR COLLAPSE OF MISSION, IT IS TIME FOR U.S. TO ... RECOGNIZE PLO.... IF ON OTHER HAND, DR. KISSINGER ... CONFINES HIS REPORT PURELY TO TECHNICALITIES..., HE WILL HAVE MISSED

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OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE HIS COUNTRY WITH INSIGHT THAT HAS ESCAPED IT FOR LONG TIME."

6. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE "DAILY STAR" ALSO QUOTES DR. HISHAM SHARABI, EDITOR OF JOURNAL OF PALESTINE STUDIES, ON FUTURE U.S. ROLE: "FUTURE OF MIDEAST NOW DEPENDS ENTIRELY UPON U.S. DECISION BY USG TO FORCE ISRAELIS TO COME TO TERMS WITH ARABS AT GENEVA PEACE CONFERENCE COULD PREVENT 'REFUSING' OF MIDEAST CRISIS. AMERICAN ROLE WILL BE DECISIVE..., BUT EVERY EXPERIENCE WE HAVE HAD SO FAR WITH THE AMERICANS INDICATES THEIR RELUCTANCE TO FORCE ISRAEL'S HAND."

7. EDITORIAL EXCERPTS FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.
GODLEY

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